

WASHINGTON - Today, Rep. Pete Stark reintroduced bills aimed at reducing child poverty and better helping Americans move from welfare to work: the Child Poverty Reduction Act and the Chance to Succeed Act.

“The stagnant economy has choked off economic empowerment and opportunity for many Americans and their families,” Stark said. “I am reintroducing legislation today that will help those families and children who have been especially hard hit during these tough times - those striving to obtain economic self-sufficiency and struggling to lift themselves out of mounting poverty.”

Rep. Stark reintroduced the Child Poverty Reduction Act to shift existing welfare laws to make continual reductions in child poverty an explicit goal of welfare. It backs up this requirement by creating financial incentives in the form of a \$150 million high performance bonus grant to States that successfully reduce child poverty. Senator Charles Schumer will introduce companion legislation in the Senate.

“It is outrageous that - in a nation as prosperous as ours - one in six American children live in poverty,” Stark continued. “For these 12 million children, poverty could have devastating impacts that last a lifetime. It is a fact that poverty can impair a child’s cognitive ability and school performance. It can contribute to early sexual activity and pregnancy, not to mention crime and unemployment. There’s no question that reducing child poverty is one of the smartest investments our country can make.”

Stark also reintroduced the Chance to Succeed Act that would create broad new guidelines to ensure that States better serve the needs of the disabled and severely disadvantaged. It amends the federal work participation requirement to include barrier-removal activities such as vocational rehabilitation, drug treatment, and domestic violence counseling. It also requires states to create individual “personal responsibility plans” that outline goals necessary for each recipient to obtain stable employment. Senators Corzine and Kennedy are introducing companion legislation in the Senate today.

“Too many Americans find themselves trapped on welfare because of a disability,” Stark said. “Others are simply ill equipped to overcome barriers such as domestic abuse, limited English proficiency or low levels of education that stand in the way of achieving meaningful employment. These Americans simply cannot succeed without assistance that is targeted at the barriers that stand between them and lasting, meaningful employment.”

“These two bills help children and people with barriers to work rise out of poverty,” Stark concluded. “This should be a bipartisan goal. However, improving the well being of poor children and helping those struggling on welfare become self-sufficient has become a forgotten priority for Republicans. Unfortunately, they didn’t support these sensible initiatives in the last Congress. I am reintroducing these bills today in hopes they will reconsider and include these sensible improvements as part of welfare reform legislation this year.”